

Waste Management Assists Garden City With Recycling Center Open House

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Reduce. Reuse. Recycle.

The city of Garden City has been recycling for more than a decade, and on Thursday it tried to inspire citizens and children to do the same. Stan Slaughter, recycling entertainer, was on hand to help, along with games and a model layout of a landfill, detailing its operations and serving as an example of what recycling works against.

It was all part of an open house at the Garden City Recycling Center, 125 JC St., one block south of Fulton Street, to increase awareness of the city's recycling efforts, said Public Works Director Sam Curran.

Garden City Public Works Director Sam Curran hoped the event raised public awareness of the facility. "We're proud of our recycling facility and hope more Garden City residents will make use of this service," said Curran. "When we recycle, it benefits both our community and the environment," he added.

The city's recycling keeps 400 to 450 tons of trash out of the landfill each year. The city spends between \$63,000 and \$76,000 a year on recycling operations, of which \$54,000 is three employees' salaries. The center generates between \$18,000 - \$22,000 from recycling. If, instead, the city would drop that waste in the landfill, it'd pay \$10,000 - \$13,000 for its disposal.

The open house brought about 160 people and four classes from St. Dominic and St. Mary Catholic schools. People feasted on Plank's Truelove BBQ, and fourth-graders from St. Mary and third-, fourth- and fifth-graders from St. Dominic laughed at Slaughter's antics, and in turn, learned about taking care of trash.

Howard Lehman, solid waste supervisor, said the city isn't ever going to make money recycling, but the benefits of keeping those materials out of the landfill will have a long-term economic benefit.

Marty Burke, with the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, agreed and said the environmental costs are lower when recycled materials are put in the mix. Oil doesn't have to be refined into plastic, trees don't have to be cut for paper, aluminum ore doesn't have to be refined and processed into beverage containers.

"That's where the real benefit is," Burke said.

Burke made the trip to Garden City as part of a pilot effort by KDHE to raise community awareness of recycling. Since Garden City's center moved from its South U.S. Highway 83 location about two years ago, it has seen an about 140-ton drop in recycled materials, according to city records.

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"It has kind of lost its excitement," Curran said of recycling. "We're kind of going through a low period, and we're hoping this activity will bring awareness back to the public."

Recyclables can be dropped off at the center anytime in a trailer. From noon to 3 p.m. on Tuesdays and 3 to 6 p.m. on Thursdays, employees will assist citizens with recyclables. There also are trailers located throughout the county for recycling - Ron's Market in Holcomb, NAPA Auto Parts, 1402 Buffalo Jones Ave., at Third Street and Kansas Avenue, the Labrador Boulevard fire station and in the north parking lot of Sears, 2310 E. Kansas Ave., near the Automotive Center.

Burke said if the city can increase the tons of recyclables it collects, through programs and other promotions such as Thursday's, it will increase the efficiency of the center.

Curran said the city has about \$136,600 worth of equipment at the center, of which \$100,949 was paid for through three KDHE grants. The money has helped pay for a Bobcat, skid loader, baler, conveyor and recycling trailers, he said. Those state funds generally come from the \$1 fee the state assesses on landfill waste.

Recycling, Burke said, makes fiscal sense. If something has value, as recyclables do, throwing them away seems senseless.

"It's common sense that you don't throw away something that has value," he said.

Lehman agreed, noting paper can be re-used seven times before its final use in things like ceiling tiles or office tab dividers. He said the city will continue to promote and make people aware of the recycling center at America's Recycling Day Nov. 15. Then, the center will host another open house and serve refreshments.

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Left Photo - Wally Mack shows students the workings of a landfill.



Bottom Photo - Marty Burke, KDHE, explains the benefits of recycling to an eager audience.